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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000142

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN ELECTIONS PREPARATIONS AND  
SECURITY OVERVIEW

REF: 08 BAGHDAD 3992

Classified By: PRT Salah ad-Din Team Leader Richard Bell for reasons 1.  
4 (b) and (d).

This is a PRT Salah ad Din reporting cable.

¶1. (C//REL TO USA, ACGU) Summary: Provincial Elections in Salah Ad Din (SaD) look to be on track despite lingering concerns of possible election-related attacks and voter intimidation. The public is showing a receptive attitude towards the elections, and political campaigns have moved into high gear. The importance of tribes and local issues is evident in SaD and results will likely reflect the many tribal divisions in the province. The Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) for SaD is reporting progress in many areas and working closely with Coalition Forces (CF) to plan for elections security. Although there is some intelligence forewarning of possible attacks by insurgents on elections day, a security plan has been prepared and appears sufficient to mitigate the majority of threats. End summary.

#### Voters and Parties Active

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¶2. (C/REL) As of early January the GEO reported 666,651 eligible voters in the province, compared to open source reports of 498,017 in 2005, a 33 percent increase. It is unclear how this will translate into turnout at the polls, however. Voters and candidates are both benefiting from the improved security environment. As an indication of the improved security environment, candidates are once again posting campaign posters with their pictures on them -- in contrast to one year ago, when SaD politicians typically did not want their picture taken because of terrorist threats. Party campaigns are getting into full swing as most groups have held their funds until mid-January for a final campaign push. The SaD Candidate list currently has 591 candidates from 45 political parties running to fill 28 seats on the council. The many parties reflect the factionalism present in SaD's tribes. Because of the numerous divisions in SaD, successful candidates will likely be those with a combination of tribal status, personal reputation and policy stance.

#### Elections Officials Busy with Preparations

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¶3. (C/REL) SaD GEO Director Hatim Abdul Hamid is heavily engaged in election preparations and recently explained to the PRT that efforts to reduce corruption and simplify the process are in place. Hatim stated there is a plan to have a comprehensive voter list posted at each voting station, including the political party and individual candidate names for the citizens' reference prior to casting their ballot. This will help some voters identify their preferred candidate and therefore increase the chances of accurate representation on the council. Safeguarding procedures and measures will include trained observers, registered locks with serial numbers on voting boxes, and voter lists for each polling station. Once all votes are reconciled with the exclusive

list of registered voters associated with the corresponding ballot box, the totals will be calculated. Election observers are scheduled to be trained by the UN; college students are being sought after to act in this capacity.

#### GOI Security Planning

14. (S//REL TO USA, MCFI) The Government of Iraq appears to be in the final stages of developing its security plan. The Third Brigade(3BCT), 25ID has been working with district and sub-district level ISF to support the Iraqi security plan. The majority of potential polling sites have been assessed and are being supported with necessary force protection Qand are being supported with necessary force protection upgrades provided both by ISF and CF. Provincial IHEC officials have further identified 70 sites which are deemed as high risk; these sites are also receiving increased security.

15. (S//REL TO USA, MCFI) CF stance during the election plans to be "visible from a distance," which will place the majority of CF ground units in a response role. CF will integrate its units into the Iraqi response plan, allowing them to handle situations before CF responds. In regards to the disputed polling sites in Tuz, we believe there is no need for special security considerations. ISF and IHEC leadership in the area downplay the threat and have warned against the introduction of Peshmerga forces. Security in Tuz will be handled by local ISF.

#### Insurgent Threats to the Elections

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16. (S//REL TO USA, MCFI) Few threat reports against the SaD elections have been received, and most of those received are from the Bayji and Balad areas. AQI has active plans to target voters in these locations; the security posture on election day will likely help determine if those attacks are actualized. In response, security and provincial officials in SaD are currently preparing detailed plans for each population center. ISF continue to make arrests, including the apprehension of two AQI fighters in December who were training for future attacks in the province. CF reporting suggests a candidate in SaD, Haylan Hassan Salih from the National Movement for Reform and Development list (al-Hal), recently hired the Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshabandi group to intimidate his political rivals.

#### Comment

17. (C//REL TO USA, ACGU) Despite an overall positive outlook, SaD will likely have its share of elections issues. Threats against the elections have been made; however, it is unlikely this will be enough to dissuade most intending voters. Citizens are expressing excitement and participating in regular open discussions. The issue most resonant in SaD is the basic quality of life; expectations are high that elections will help address these concerns. End comment.  
CROCKER